Volume 4, Issue 6   Atari Online News, Etc.   February 8, 2002

Atari Online News, Etc. Staff

Dana P. Jacobson -- Editor
Joe Mirando -- "People Are Talking"
Michael Burkley -- "Unabashed Atariophile"
Albert Dayes -- "CC: Classic Chips"
Rob Mahlert -- Web site
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With Contributions by:

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     ~ PayPal IPO To Succeed?  ~ People Are Talking!    ~ HighWire Update!
     ~ Sun Releases Java 2!    ~ EarthLink Star Trek    ~ Lynx 'CyberVirus'!
     ~ EarthLink Goes StarTrek ~ FracIRC, Doodle Source ~ Web's Next Phase!

     ~ HP Sets Date For Vote!  ~ Hate Speech Limits?    ~ STeem 2.1 Released!



                   -* Suing Microsoft? Who's Next! *-
                 -* Microsoft, US Urge One-Day Hearing! *-
               -* Better Business Bureau Debuts Privacy Site *-




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->From the Editor's Keyboard              "Saying it like it is!"
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Well, the winter cold has finally settled into New England although the
forecast is for "warmer" temperatures. That's fine, as we've been really
fortunate this year, so far!

It's been another of those strange weeks. It just seemed like nothing
would go as planned. Murphy's Law was running rampant all week! Snafus at
work. Wrenched my back tripping over one of the dogs in the wee hours of
the morning. I don't even want to remember what else happened! Good news,
the Patriots! Professional football hasn't interested me in a few years
because I've become disillusioned by the way money has taken over
professional sports. But this year, I actually enjoyed watching the Pats
because there wasn't a zillion dollar quarterback running the show. Here
was a team destined for greatness - at least for this year. It was fun
watching the Super Bowl for a change.

I'll be heading to Maine this weekend to visit my Dad. It's getting close
to the anniversary of my Mom's death last year; and it appears that he's
getting despondent. Her death, plus some pending back surgery, has him
in a slump. My brother figures that if he and I stay over for a bit, he may
get into better spirits. So, It appears a road trip is in store. Should be
fun. Well, let's get on with the news for this week!

Until next time...

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                 HighWire Version 0.02 Released!

Version 0.02 of the html Rendering Engine HighWire is now available for
download.

There have been great improvements in both speed and stability recently.

Several little annoying GEM interface problems have been eliminated. Table
support has been expanded, however it is not yet finished. We also have a
French version of the documentation available with the help of ProToS from
the Arcadia Crew. Hopefully this release will silence some of the
detractors who have been saying our task is impossible. Our goal is
achievable, it will just take time and your support. We can always use more
programmers and support on the documentation side of the project always is
a critical need. Translation support for more languages would be a great
addition to the project as well.

http://highwire.atari-users.net/

Sources for FracIRC, TelVT102 and Doodle Released

The sources for the irc-client FracIRC and the telnet-client TelVT102
as well as the STiK application Doodle were today uploaded to The
Orphaned Projects Page. First two applications are written in C while
Doodle was coded in GFA, and they have all been discontinued since
quite a while.

With the sources available it will now be possible to revive them,
provided that one of you programmers is up for the challenge :)

http://topp.atari-users.net/

Steem 2.1 Released

Steem v2.1 has been released, lots of new features, lots of bug fixes:

-- Bug Fixes --
. v2.06 GraftGold fetch bug (Paradroid 90, Rainbow Islands).
. Lots of timings (Bird Mad Girl Show, many full screens).
. Bit shift bugs (a few protection routines).
. More cartridge bugs.
. More file association bugs.
. Steem no longer needs DirectX to be installed to be able to run.
. Lots of disk manager properties bugs.

-- New Features --
. Brightness/contrast.
. Automatic mixed resolution display in any drawing mode.
. Slow motion speed.
. PC display refresh synchronization.
. Loads of MIDI options.
. Special effects for full screen.
. Joystick setups.
. Up to 8 PC joysticks can now be used (DirectInput only)

http://www.blimey.strayduck.com/

Fading Twilight CD 4 Released

The largest collection of Atari ST/Falcon/Jaguar music have just had
another giant update. 650 megabytes of music from Atari musicians,
originating from games, demos and even unreleased tracks.

The fourth CD features the following artists:

BabyDee / Effect
Baggio / Wildfire
Drax & Bern / Bodenstaendig 2000
D-Force / Fun
Gmx / Satantronic
Ice / Depression
Iso / Sentry^Axis
Dave, Ryan, Simon & Derek / Trideja
Mr. Future / Paranoia
Scavenger / Synergy
Sparehead 3 / Reservoir Gods
Tarzan Boy / Stax
Toodeloo / Dead Hackers Society
Tyan / Stax
Xtream / TooNS

To browse thru the new FT4 (or the previous three CD's) you can visit
Atari.Org's mirror on the URL below. There you'll also find links where
to download ISO9660 images and where to find information about ordering
the CD's.

http://fading-twilight.atari.org/

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                      PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                    compiled by Joe Mirando
                       joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Mark today down on the calendar folks. I
really don't have much to say. When was the last time you remember THAT
happening?

I would like to thank the person who joined the TEAM ATARI SETI@home
search group this past week. With that, we've attained the goal I had
in mind when I started the team... Fifty members.

Of course if you haven't joined, you still can. It's a pretty cool
project, and you don't need to know anything about astrophysics or
math or even Star Trek or Babylon5. <grin>

Well believe it or not, I'm all talked out. So let's get on with the
news and STuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Krystian Sergiejew asks about slaving one machine to another:

"I have 1040STF and 520STM that I have purchased very recently for my vintage computer collection. I would like to play with these a little, but the problem is that I cannot hookup the 1040 because I don't have the monitor that would work with it. On the other hand, I have a perfectly working 520 on a TV set, but I don't have a floppy drive for it.

I was wondering if I could turn on both computers and connect them with standard floppy cable to be able to use 1040's floppy on 520? Is this doable, or am I at risk on damaging something?"

Greg Goodwin tells Krystian:

"This is possible with LittleNet, which runs as an accessory via the MIDI cables. The only minor concern is that it might default to read-only, so unless you can see the screen to check the 'write enable' box, it might be a one way solution.

I had a copy of LittleNet until very recently on my hard drive, but I fear it is now deleted (it conflicts with Geneva, which I use almost exclusively). Try the Belgian FTP server."

Dennis van der Burg asks about his new Mega2:

"Recently I picked up a Mega ST2 from a second hand shop. When I powered it up, I was amazed to see the TOS 1.02 desktop. I thought the Mega ST always came with TOS 1.04? Does this mean that this Mega ST doesn't have a BLITTER chip (since I cannot turn the blitter on or off in the TOS 1.02 desktop menu)?

I also noticed that this Mega ST has a cooler fan, whereas my other Mega ST (with TOS 1.04) has not got one ... is the fan typical for an early Mega ST?"

Tony Cianfaglione adds a question to the previous one:

"A further question to the one below: I've seen 2 Megas - each with a different nameplate. One says Mega ST, the other ST Mega; both have 2 mb ram and otherwise look the same. Is there a difference other than the obvious name switch?"

Kenneth Medin tells Dennis and Tony:

"Early Mega 2 did come without the blitter chip. I bought mine in late 1987 with English TOS 1.2 as there were no Swedish TOS ready. When I bought it the dealer clearly stated that he would later put in the blitter chip without cost.

Without [a] blitter no blitter enable menu entry was present in the desktop. When I got the blitter chip this entry appeared so I guess this functionality to sense if a blitter is present is built into TOS.

As far as I know, all Mega ST have a fan built into the power supply. I also have a newer Mega 4 (with TOS 1.4) with fan."

Michael Livsey asks about servicing his trusty 1040:

"Just thinking preemptively here, but is there anyone in the UK who specialises in spares and repairs on the Atari 1040? I've been running my synth set-up on my trusty machine using Cubase since what, 1990? I'm not worried about it yet, but it pays to think ahead. A spare mouse might be needed soon at least. I wonder if my PC will prove as reliable as the Atari has over the years?

By the way, you can hear some of my Atari-sequenced compositions at.. http://www.twoforjoy.btinternet.co.uk/beingthere.html"

Chris Thorley asks about taking his Mega's video and kicking it up a notch... BAM!:

"I have heard that it's possible to fit an alternate graphics card to a MegaST4. Can anyone confirm this and tell me if they're still available?"

'Simon' at PNC tells Chris:

"You can either use a Crazy dots or a Panther Chris, the Panther is still available but I think it's in kit form."

Mark Duckworth talks about his idea for an ethernet adaptor:

"This post addresses two subjects. The first being that I have searched desperately and have found a Genius E3000-II pocket ethernet adapter, the kind that is sold with Elmar Hilgarte's no longer existent package. Much to my amusement, I hear several people have these adapters or can get them but have no rom port adapter. Needless to say I will be manufacturing several of these using press-n-peel paper and my etching kit. The electronics are available from mouser for <$1.00 per board. Since I must buy a 30 pack of press-n-peel sheets I have the possibility to manufacture many of these rom port adapters. Please email me if you would like one.

Ordinarily I would just buy from Elmar, but he has trouble answering his e-mail ;-) It is worth noting that I live in the US whereas elmar is overseas. Also worth noting that I do not have ANY spares of the Genius LAN adapter. This is the _HARD_ part to get hold of.

My second question is... Is there any diagrams out there ready for printing of Nova card or Panther card. I would like to manufacture these boards if I can. The Nova only has one or two little chips on there but my roommate who owns the TT claims it's a specialized IC. I haven't peered into it yet. Aside from that, it's just traces that connect VME to ISA bus.

I have never etched anything using press-n-peel sheets yet, so don't count on me yet, but I am curious how much interest there would be for me to produce things that are free for me to produce, and charge minimal cost (supplies)."

Lonny Pursell tells Mark:

"I used to have a Nova VME card, there was one chip on it that appeared to be a GAL, other than that it was just a few diodes and resistors and maybe a cap. I'm not sure if the chip was a GAL to be honest. The other thing worth noting is the one I had was for TT only use. Some

have jumpers and can be fitted into a MegaSTE."

Lyndon Amsdon adds:

"Hmm, I doubt press and peel can do the fine pitch of Elmars design (SMD). If you really want to use press and peel (biggest waste of time IMO) you'll have to change your design. There is 99% chance NOVA does use some sort of GALs or similar logic. Unless they were not locked, you have little chance reverse engineering this. You'd also be breaking copyright laws. And the Panther is made by http://www.wrsonline.de unless they stopped stock. Again, is this not copyrighted? You'd be better doing a modification of the ET4000. I was going to have a go with it on my Falcon, should move across easy enough. But really, the ET4000 doesn't have good enough specs against Videl considering the compatibility drop."

Mark replies to Lonny and Lyndon:

"Alright I am listening, how did he manufacture his design then? I am kind of new to this so I don't know if he had professional manufacturer do it or what. Why do you think press-n-peel is a big waste of time. Yeah I figured that was a GAL on the Nova, and I realized I would be breaking copyright laws. But I think it's kind of silly for them to be charging $800 for a $40 video card and a $1 IC on a 50 cent board. I can understand everyone needs to make money, but greed definitely took it's toll on those prices. And they gave the drivers out for free, so they can't claim that that's where the cost was. If I created a second Nova board, it wouldn't be for anything except my own personal use and it'd never be sold.

Noticed the chips I can get are LS374N and LS374S, do you know what the difference is? Is that just the packaging and mounting, S being surface mount?"

Lyndon tells Mark:

"[He used] Professional PCB makers.

Been there done that. It [press-n-peel] left tracks that were bitty and in tight places the plastic didn't pull off board. You heat the stuff onto the copper clad board, pulling it off always made a mess of the design. Fine for designs where tracks don't run between IC pins.

$800? Where was that!! I'd say that was a rip off, I though Nova was a complicated board. Maybe I was wrong, ah, this is ISA right? Did they ever do PCI, PCI is more of a challenge ;)

The important parts for TTL is the LS (determines speed grade, power consumption etc) and the number afterward is the actual chip function. eg, you could use HCT374 if you want, but better to stick to what it says. The letter afterward is sometimes just manufacturer branding, I never looked into that."

Atrur Stransky asks:

"Maybe/possibly I'm absolutely wrong, but I remember an iX-magazine article two or three years ago about running linux on various computer systems, and I think the article said something about porting linux to a 1040st. Is this possible?"

Chris tells Artur:

"You maybe able to port Linux to a 1040ST as long as you have a 68020 or
higher CPU replacement. There had been some work on a uclinux
port to the 520ST, but not much has been done with it. The original
author booted STonX. I have tested it with a real 1Meg 520ST and
that also works.

Here is the link:

http://www.esat.kuleuven.ac.be/~pcoene/atari.html

uclinux can be found here:

http://www.uclinux.org/

Of course, debian-68k already works on a TT or Falcon.

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same
time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying
when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Video Games, Hardware Hit Record!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Video Games Turn Into Books?!
                                     Lynx 'CyberVirus'!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                   Publishers Seek Video Game Tie-ins

Producer Jerry Bruckheimer could find himself at the vanguard of a new book
trend.

The publishing and video game industries -- two businesses that once had
little in common -- are exploring new ways to exploit each other, and a
book that Bruckheimer has optioned with the Walt Disney Co., Michael E.
Kersjes' memoir ''A Smile as Big as the Moon," could be an interesting
test case.

Kersjes, a football coach and educator, recounts in the book how he sent a

group of neglected and handicapped children to NASA space camp in
Huntsville, Ala., where they excelled at activities like mock takeoffs and
flight simulations. Now Kersjes' agency, Acme Talent & Literary, is
creating a flight simulator video game based on the program he created.

Acme, which launched an interactive division nine months ago, is developing
video games from other books, including a selection of sci-fi titles by
William R. Forstchen, who recently sold a series of time-travel Civil War
novels to Cruise/Wagner and Paramount. Forstchen is among a relatively
small circle of sci-fi writers who are also avid gamers.

Del Rey, an imprint of Random House, is hoping for its own brand of video
game synergy by recruiting some of those writers for a series of books it's
publishing in partnership with Microsoft's Xbox video game system.

Del Rey, which already published ''Halo: The Fall of Reach," based on an
Xbox game, on Tuesday announced the creation of a fiction publishing
program based on such games as ''The Unseen" and ''Crimson Skies."

Del Rey exec editor Steve Saffel said the partnership stems from a chance
encounter at the 2000 ComiCon convention in San Diego, where he began
batting ideas around with Microsoft reps. Now, with the first ''Halo"
title selling in both computer and book retail outlets, he hopes to tap an
audience that's largely ignored by publishers.

At a time of stagnant book sales industrywide, that could set a precedent
for other publishers. As Acme's Kevin Cleary and Josh Morris put it, such
readers are ''going to buy (the books) and read them because they're 'Halo'
fans. It's like when somebody likes a car. He's going to read Hot Rod and
books about Dale Earnhardt. Is this the same reader who's reading Danielle
Steel? No."

Vivendi Universal CEO Jean-Marie Messier was recently pummeled in the
French press for suggesting his country's cultural regulatory system is
obsolete. So he may take some comfort in the fact that his subordinates at
Universal Pictures are doing their bit for French cultural literacy in
Hollywood.

The studio has optioned ''Le Voyeur," a novel by Alain Robbe-Grillet,
father of the Nouveau Roman and the screenwriter behind Alain Resnais' New
Wave classic ''Last Year at Marienbad."

Universal-based producer Kevin Misher is producing the project, a
psychological thriller about a traveling watch salesman who may have
murdered a teenage girl. The book was published in 1955, and a Grove Press
English edition has remained in print since 1958. Grove paid less than
$1,000 to acquire the book, but its value has matured. It will cost
Universal a substantial six figures if ''Le Voyeur" is produced.

Robbe-Grillet, who turns 80 this year, has directed several French films
based on his original scripts that Georges Borchardt, his U.S. agent, said
are ''fairly erotic and have a bizarre, suspenseful undercurrent." But no
films have ever been based on one of his books.

Robbe-Grillet's latest, as yet untranslated, novel, ''La Reprise," also
just hit the French bestseller lists, a first for the author.

''He called me and was concerned about it, and I told him it was a lot
better than being famous posthumously," Borchardt said.

Video Games, Hardware Sales Hit Record in 2001

Spurred by the launch of three new game machines, U.S. sales of video games and related hardware reached $9.4 billion in 2001, shattering 1999's record of $6.9 billion and topping the Hollywood box office for the year, according to a report released on Thursday.

Sales of game consoles increased 39 percent in unit terms, according to market research firm NPD, while sales in dollar terms more than doubled, rising 120 percent.

Sales of game software reached $6 billion in 2001, up from $5.4 billion in 2000.

In contrast, the total domestic box office receipts for Hollywood movies in 2001 were $8.4 billion.

The best-selling game was Take-Two Interactive Software Inc.'s "Grand Theft Auto 3," a controversial criminal adventure game that has sold 2 million copies since its October launch. The game was banned in Australia due to its violence.

However, a Take-Two spokeswoman said the game has since been modified and a toned-down version is now being shipped in Australia.

Electronic Arts Inc.'s "The Sims," which has sold 2.6 million copies since its launch and spawned a number of expansion packs, was the top-selling PC game of the year.

Nintendo of America, the U.S. arm of Nintendo Co. Ltd. , was the top publisher for consoles and handhelds for the year, with three top-10 titles. All three games were for Nintendo's own Game Boy handheld line.

Sony Corp.'s PlayStation line dominated the market, with seven of the top 10 titles. Of the top PS2 titles, Electronic Arts had five.

Electronic Arts also dominated the PC Top 10, with six titles, four of which were "Sims"-related.

Last year was marked by a flurry of new hardware launches, beginning with Nintendo's Game Boy Advance in June, followed by Nintendo's GameCube console and Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox console, both of which launched in November.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online   -   Online Users Growl & Purr!
  """"""""""""""""""""

             Lock and Load, It's Time for CyberVirus!

February 4th, 2002

For immediate release:

ROCHESTER, MN -- CyberVirus will begin shipping to eager Lynx fans on February 18, 2002. The retail price is $42.95 plus shipping ($5 for USA/Canada, $8 for international). PayPal orders may be sent to songbird@atari.net, and check/MO orders may be sent using the printable order form available on http://songbird.atari.net. All international orders should use PayPal unless other arrangements have been made directly with Songbird.

CyberVirus takes Lynx gaming to an entirely new level by offering 16 action-packed missions all set in an amazing 3D environment. You are a soldier inserted deep into enemy territory, where you alone hold the key to turn back the Cybot threat. Avoid land mines and hunt for weapon prototypes while repelling robots, mutant spiders, and other enemies. This general release of CyberVirus contains many new features, including stealth armor, strafing movement, powerups, storyboards, an enhanced mission select screen, new objectives, all-new cheats and easter eggs, and more.

Songbird Productions is the premier developer and publisher for the Atari Lynx and Jaguar. To keep up to date with the latest news at Songbird Productions, be sure to visit the company web site at http://songbird.atari.net. CyberVirus is copyright and trademark 2001 Songbird Productions. All rights reserved. This message may be reprinted in its entirety.

                    2600 Connection #69 Is Now Available

The long-awaited, astoundingly-overdue issue #69 of the 2600 Connection is now available.

#69 (Nov/Dec 2001) Activision TV Games From Toymax review by Lee Krueger, Miscellaneous Hardware Hacks by Chris Pepin, Marco Antonio Checa Funcke, Lee Krueger, Chris Wilkson, Kevin Horton and Robert Mitchell, 2600 Arcade Cabinet photo, News & Notes, Letters, Classifieds.

Ordering information

Subscription prices for one year (six bi-monthly issues): United States: $9; Canada/Mexico: $10.50; International (outside North America): $12 (payment in U.S. funds please). I can also accept subscriptions for any number of issues at the rate of $1.50 (US), $1.75 (CN/MX) or $2.00 (world) per issue.

I will accept cash, but prefer check or money order, payable to: Russ Perry Jr. Payments via PayPal are accepted if you ask ahead of time, and I will also accept 5 $0.34 stamps per issue (for US subs), but like cash, these methods are not preferred.

The 2600 Connection
c/o Russ Perry Jr
2175 S Tonne Dr #114
Arlington Hts IL 60005

Back issues are also available.
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                     A-ONE's Headline News
                The Latest in Computer Technology News
                    Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

                     Suing Microsoft: Who's Next?

Since AOL filed an antitrust suit against Microsoft last week on behalf of
its Netscape Communications subsidiary, the possibility of further
litigation against the software giant by other companies considered to have
suffered similar damages has widened, according to analysts.

But which company will be next in line behind AOL is less clear. Among the
group are Apple, Intel, IBM and RealNetworks.

There does seem, however, to be one particularly strong contender: Sun
Microsystems.

"You could certainly put Sun on a shortlist," Giga Information Group
analyst Rob Enderle told NewsFactor.

Forrester research director Carl Howe also told NewsFactor that he would
not be surprised if Sun were to sue Microsoft.

"But I think it's harder for them to make the argument that they were
directly injured," Howe said.

Sun has done little to quell speculation about its legal plans. Sun
spokesperson Penny Bruce told NewsFactor, regarding further litigation
with Microsoft, that "Sun considers all of its options all of the time."

David Smith, lead Microsoft analyst at Gartner, told NewsFactor that he
believes Sun -- a company known for its anti-Microsoft sentiments --
appeared "remarkably" quiet on the AOL/Netscape lawsuit. But despite its
long history of litigation, Smith believes Sun will "think long and hard
before they get involved in another [case]."

While Apple is considered to be second in the lawsuit line, the company
holds a contract for production of Microsoft Office that is in effect
until August of 2002. That contract could be a deciding factor in Apple's
legal strategy, according to analysts.

"Apple and Microsoft have this weird love-hate relationship," Giga's
Enderle said. "Apple will resist filing suit as long as possible because

they are so dependent upon Microsoft Office."

Enderle noted that Apple may turn directly to Microsoft, or to the U.S. government for redress, saying he believes the company is "less likely to file their own action."

Gartner's Smith also pointed to Apple as a company that could possibly file suit against Microsoft.

According to Enderle, IBM and Intel are far less likely to respond to Microsoft with litigation. He cited IBM's tendency to use lawsuits defensively rather than offensively, as well as Intel's inclination to sue primarily over intellectual property rights issues.

Although a lawsuit by RealNetworks is "always a possibility," Enderle said, other companies may step forward.

"I think we'll find as time goes on that firms in peripheral space, like some of the Linux companies, may decide they want to take their run at Microsoft. So, we'll see if that plays through," he added.

Microsoft spokesman Jim Desler told NewsFactor in an interview that he could not speculate about whether the company expects any further lawsuits stemming from the antitrust judgments.

But Desler did note that Microsoft believes the basis for the AOL suit is already beyond the court's findings.

"What AOL has done with this suit is to move well beyond what has been found by the court of appeals ... to apparently continue litigating against Microsoft," Desler said.

While Microsoft works to settle with the U.S. Department of Justice, public comment on the proposed DOJ settlement ends on Monday, February 4, 2002. U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly then will wait 30 days for comments from the DOJ before making a final ruling.

The company said the current federal settlement will address the issues raised by its competitors.

"We believe that the settlement as reached with the Department of Justice is a very tough but fair way of resolving this case," Desler noted.

Microsoft still must face off against the nine states that have broken with the DOJ and sought to continue the lawsuit. A remedy hearing in that case is expected in early March.

            Microsoft, U.S. Urge One-Day Hearing on Settlement

Lawyers for Microsoft Corp. and the U.S. Justice Department recommended on Thursday that a federal judge hold a one-day hearing on the proposed settlement of the antitrust case against the company, and bar critics of the deal from participating at the hearing.

But critics of the deal said a one-day hearing would be too short and insisted the judge should be presented with an opposing viewpoint.

In a status report to U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly, Microsoft and the Justice Department said the hearing should not include arguments by outside parties. Under a law called the Tunney Act, Kollar-Kotelly must determine whether the proposed antitrust settlement is in the public interest.

Microsoft and the department said it is "unwarranted and unnecessary" for anyone to take part in the hearing aside from themselves and nine states that are part of the settlement. Nine other states are pressing for stronger sanctions against Microsoft for illegally maintaining its monopoly in personal computer operating systems.

Microsoft and the Justice Department said that even if the judge decides to let others participate in the settlement hearing, outside arguments should be kept short, "limited to a small, manageable number of such parties," and balanced between supporters and opponents of the settlement.

Kollar-Kotelly has ordered Microsoft and the department to be in court on Friday morning to discuss the status of the Tunney Act proceedings.

The judge has said she will begin separate hearings on March 11 on the proposals for stiffer sanctions by the nine nonsettling states.

Microsoft and the Justice Department said they would give the judge any amendments they want to make to the settlement deal by Feb. 27. But Microsoft spokesman Jim Desler said significant changes to the deal are "unlikely."

The Microsoft-Justice Department report noted that two-thirds of the roughly 22,500 public comments submitted to the Justice Department during a recent, 60-day public comment period expressed opposition to the settlement.

But of those, only 2,900 comments "can be characterized as containing a degree of detailed substance concerning the (settlement)," the report says. It said only 45 were "major" submissions.

Microsoft spokesman Jim Desler said polls have shown public support for settling the case. He said the court proceeding "isn't really about keeping score."

"It's a thoughtful deliberative process to determine whether the (settlement) is in the public interest," Desler said. "We believe that it's a tough and fair settlement and is in the public interest."

In the report, the Justice Department and Microsoft said the hearing should be held early in March and would be a forum to present their arguments for the settlement, "answer any questions the Court may raise, and provide any additional information or explanation the court requires."

But Ed Black, president of the Computer & Communications Industry Association, an organization that has backed the case against Microsoft, said, "This a historic, huge trial. The idea that they are trying to truncate these proceedings both in substance and length can only be read as an indication that they know how vulnerable this settlement is to real scrutiny.

"There needs to be a well articulated alternative and adversarial voice to probe this agreement," Black said.

In Thursday's report, Microsoft and the Justice Department said outside groups are usually barred from such a hearing because "the potential for delay outweighs the benefit from intervention and because interested third parties are heard through the comments process."

"That is particularly true in this case, where a large number of highly interested and motivated third parties have taken full advantage of the opportunity to submit extensive comments ...," the report says.

Remarks on Microsoft Case Mostly Oppose Settlement

The public along with a predictable collection of lawyers and lobbyists has delivered its verdict on the government's settlement plan in the Microsoft case. Thumbs down, it seems, according to the sprawling democratic cacophony found in some 30,000 public comments received by the Justice Department.

In a joint filing by the government and Microsoft in Federal District Court in Washington yesterday, the rough tabulation presented was 7,500 comments in favor of the settlement announced last November and 15,000 opposed, while the rest did not comment directly on the settlement.

"A significant number of comments," the report said, "contain opinions concerning Microsoft, e.g., 'I hate Microsoft,' or concerning this antitrust case generally, e.g., 'This case should never have been brought.' "

Fewer than 10 percent of the comments or 2,900 were deemed by lawyers for the Justice Department and Microsoft to be worthy of being "characterized as containing a degree of detailed substance."

Being so selective, the government and corporate lawyers might seem picky or snobbish in their classifications. But perhaps not, given that, as the report noted, "roughly 2,800 comments are 'form' letters or e-mails essentially identical text submitted by different persons."

Some people had idiosyncratic notions of what was an appropriate response to the government's request for comment on a proposed ending to the historic antitrust case. "A small number of these submissions," the report said, "are simply advertisements or, in at least one case, pornography." No further details were supplied.

The thousands of public comments were collected in 60 days, from Nov. 28 to Jan. 28, in accordance with the Tunney Act. The Tunney Act of 1974 was passed as sunshine legislation to protect the public interest in antitrust cases. It came in reaction to charges that lobbyists had pressed the Nixon administration to drop an antitrust case against ITT.

The government and Microsoft asked that Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly hold a one-day hearing on the settlement on March 4. The request for such a brief hearing may be wishful thinking, according to legal scholars.

In addition, the filing yesterday concerned only one track of the consideration of the settlement, which includes the Justice Department, Microsoft and nine states that concur with the proposed settlement. Under it, Microsoft agreed to stop its anticompetitive practices and share technical information with industry partners and rivals.

But nine other states oppose the settlement, saying it is too lenient toward Microsoft. Other hearings before Judge Kollar-Kotelly, which could run for weeks, are expected to involve the nine states contesting the settlement.

In any case, the plaintiffs' requests are only requests. The judge has wide discretion on hearings and on the form of any settlement she eventually approves. Similarly, the public comments, despite their volume, do not necessarily have any influence on the judge's ruling.

Hewlett-Packard Sets March 19 Merger Vote

Computer and printer maker Hewlett-Packard Co. on Tuesday said it has set a shareholder vote for March 19 on its controversial plan to buy Compaq Computer Corp., in what would be the computer industry's largest merger.

Compaq will hold its meeting a day later, the companies said in regulatory filings.

Dissident Hewlett-Packard board member Walter Hewlett, a son of co-founder Bill Hewlett, urged shareholders to join members of the founding families, which hold 18 percent of Hewlett-Packard stock, in opposing the $23 billion deal.

Hewlett said in a statement that he had begun mailing his own proxy materials to shareholders.

The vote dates fit the timetable that Hewlett-Packard and Compaq laid out when they announced the deal in September. They said they expected it to close in the first half of 2002.

``I don't think it should come as a surprise to anyone that we are in fact on plan," Compaq spokesman Arch Currid said on Tuesday.

But the outcome of the vote is unclear, one analyst said.

``I think it is too hard to call," said Bear Stearns analyst Andrew Neff.

Hewlett-Packard Chief Executive Carly Fiorina on Monday said the company would report a profit that was far above expectations for the quarter ended in January, proving management's mettle.

Hewlett-Packard had enough support from institutional investors to win the merger vote, she asserted, drawing a harsh rebuttal from Hewlett, who also has been meeting with fund managers and sees strong support for scrapping the deal.

Walter Hewlett told stockholders in a letter with proxy materials that strong financial results showed the company was fine on its own and that HP needed to focus on its strengths.

``HP is a strong company. HP is not in crisis. Don't bet the Company on the Compaq transaction. It would be a mistake to become the world's largest commodity computing company, more than doubling HP's exposure to the troubled PC business. That would be a crisis," Hewlett said in the letter.

Hewlett-Packard argues that the merged company would provide one-stop shopping for many companies and that the deal would build a high-end computing and services powerhouse as well as let management cut costs to build profit.

Better Business Bureau Debuts Privacy Site

The Better Business Bureau ushered in National Consumer Protection Week by launching a new Web site on Monday.
od News: More E-tail Complaints

The site, called the Safe Shopping Site, lets consumers locate online companies that have met BBB standards for privacy in e-commerce. It also educates online shoppers about how to protect their privacy on the Internet.

"It makes it much easier for consumers to find companies that have committed to our standards," BBBOnline chief operating officer Charlie Underhill told the E-Commerce Times.

The BBB also said it plans to use the site to enable new and existing businesses to comply with customer expectations for privacy.

Visitors to the new site can search among nearly 11,000 Web sites that display one or both of the BBBOnline Privacy and Reliability seals.

"Helping online consumers protect their personally identifiable information and convincing businesses to commit to the fair treatment and use of such information is an important hallmark of BBBOnLine," Underhill said.

"The new BBBOnLine Safe Shopping Site will further enhance our efforts in this arena."

Recent survey statistics indicate that the site's launch is well timed, as alleviating privacy concerns is still an important e-commerce catalyst.

Nearly 9 in 10 consumers would be more confident making an online purchase from a company that displays a BBBOnline Privacy or Reliability Seal than from a company that does not, according to a recent survey by Greenfield Online.

"The BBB system will encourage the business community to step up to the plate and meet consumer expectations regarding online privacy," said Ken Hunter, president and CEO of the Council of Better Business Bureaus (CBBB) and BBBOnline.

While the BBBOnline certifications ensure that sites act responsibly when handling personal information gathered online and that ethical business practices are upheld, the organization cannot keep strict tabs on every business it certifies, Underhill admitted.

But one analyst suggested that a watchdog mentality is not necessary for BBBOnline to positively impact e-commerce.

"To the extent that the [BBBOnline seals] have some name recognition, they provide value," Gartner analyst Kenneth Kerr told the E-Commerce Times.

"None of the privacy companies are household names yet, but any seal instills consumer confidence."

That said, 93 percent of online consumers recognize the BBB name, according to Greenfield Online.

While daily monitoring is not possible, streams of inbound complaint calls fielded by BBBOnline enable it to correct egregious lapses in compliance, according to Underhill.

"Consumers turn to the BBB to complain more than they do to any other organization," he said. "It is this complaint handling that creates a safety net and [allows us to pursue] companies that do not make efforts to resolve complaints."

Analysts: PayPal IPO Should Pay Off

With online payment company PayPal set for a Thursday IPO, analysts are optimistic about its prospects.

"The signs are there that they will continue to be successful," Gartner analyst Avivah Litan told the E-Commerce Times. Litan expects the IPO to be successful, but "not the wild kind of success we saw a few years ago."

The company plans to offer 5.4 million shares priced between US$12 and $14.

According to analysts, PayPal has done a good job of cornering the online payment market.

"People will move to online financial services if they improve the physical world, and PayPal is a great example of that," Giga Information Group analyst Penny Gillespie told the E-Commerce Times.

In a study released Tuesday, Gartner said PayPal is likely to expand beyond the person-to-person market and become the electronic cash standard for Web purchases.

Of 1,000 U.S. online consumers surveyed, 33 percent said they consider PayPal a "highly trusted" provider of payment services; 27 percent already use the company's services; and 8 percent plan to use PayPal for future purchases.

"Overwhelming market lead and brand awareness position PayPal as the company most likely to establish the long-awaited and critical e-cash standard for Internet purchases, especially for items less than $50," Litan said.

PayPal does face competition, including Yahoo! PayDirect, Citibank's c2it, Western Union's MoneyZap, the U.S. Postal Service's CheckFree and a joint venture between EBay and Wells Fargo. But Litan said PayPal "already has too much of an early-mover advantage."

Gartner found that just 11 percent of online shoppers use EBay's payment system, while 3 percent use Yahoo's service and 1 percent use c2it.

Although it has four times as many personal customers as business

accounts, PayPal gets most of its revenue from transactions paid by merchants, and those transaction fees are going up.

According to a filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, the average fee in the fourth quarter was 3.2 percent, up from 2.1 percent a year ago.

Most of PayPal's business customers are small, but once the company reaches 25 million users -- up from 13 million today -- large e-tailers may be forced to accept PayPal as an alternative to credit card payments, Litan said.

Credit cards currently are used in more than 93 percent of online payment transactions.

Despite strong revenue, PayPal has yet to book a profitable quarter. For the fourth quarter, the company reported $40.4 million in revenue -- a 357 percent increase over the year-ago period -- but had a net loss of $18.5 million, compared with a loss of $41.9 million in the fourth quarter of 2000.

Litan expects PayPal to get out of the red in the first quarter with a profit of about $3 million.

Even if it can post a profit, PayPal faces other obstacles.

"They are moving a lot of money and they are getting too big to fail, so regulators are starting to look at them more carefully," Litan said.

Four states, including California and New York, are considering regulating PayPal.

PayPal also depends heavily on EBay. In the first nine months of 2001, the company said, 68.3 percent of payments were made through an auction site, primarily EBay. That may cause concern among investors, since PayPal has no contract with the auction giant and, in fact, has a majority stake in a competing payment system.

Gillespie said PayPal may have a problem if its ability to process auction payments is somehow curbed, but she does see other opportunities.

"There are a lot of other auction houses besides EBay," Gillespie said. "I don't think it's totally far-fetched that we would see online providers accepting multiple payment methods, as they do with credit cards."

Sun Releases New Java 2

Sun Microsystems made available a new version of the Java 2 platform this week, with new features that should benefit both client- and server-side Java applications.

The new version of the Java 2 Standard Edition, version 1.4, is the first release developed through the JavaCommunity Process. The JCP is a group of 39 companies that collaborate via working groups to move the programming language forward.

While a new version of the standard edition of Java is important,

enterprise developers are looking forward to a similar revision of Java 2
Enterprise Edition, or J2EE, expected to reach version 1.4 later this
year. J2EE 1.4 will have a major emphasis on integrating Web services into
the platform.

According to Sun, J2SE 1.4 is 58 percent faster than version 1.3.1, based
on Java benchmark tests. The platform has also improved the performance of
graphical applets written using the release's Swing components, promising
a 40 percent improvement in graphical user interface responsiveness.

Other improvements in J2SE 1.4 include improved input/output and 64-bit
processor support, as well as enhanced support for standards such as SSL,
LDAP, CORBA and XML. Combined with Sun's recently-released Java Web
Services Developer Pack, available now in early release, developers can
use the new Java platform release to build Web services, Sun said.

Also available in J2SE 1.4 are new GUI controls, accelerated Java 2DT
graphics performance, expanded internationalization and localization
support, new deployment options and expanded support for Windows XP.

J2SE version 1.4 can be downloaded from Sun's Web site.

EarthLink Lands "Star Trek" Deal

"Star Trek" has a new mission: to explore strange new worlds online.

EarthLink said Tuesday that it has teamed with Paramount Digital
Entertainment to offer "Star Trek"-branded Net access in an attempt to
seek out new subscribers.

The service, available to people using dial-up or high-speed Internet
connections, offers fans a "Star Trek"-themed browser, a StarTrek.net
e-mail address, and other features such as desktop wallpaper, sounds and
icons. In addition, subscribers will receive sneak peeks at "Star Trek"
productions, interviews with the cast and crew, and other content related
to the premiere season of "Enterprise," the latest installment of the
"Star Trek" TV series.

The launch comes as EarthLink struggles to keep pace with competitors
including Internet and media giant AOL Time Warner. Atlanta-based
EarthLink, with just 4.8 million customers, lags behind America Online and
Microsoft's MSN, which count 33 million and 7.7 million members,
respectively.

Both AOL and MSN have been working to attract new subscribers with
exclusive promotions involving popular TV programs, chart-topping bands
and new films.

Meanwhile, EarthLink has been attempting to speed past its rivals by
making an aggressive push to convert dial-up customers to broadband. Last
month, EarthLink signed deals with PC makers to prominently place its
high-speed service on Presarios, Compaq Computer's line of PCs.

Analysts said it remains to be seen whether people will rush to sign up
for EarthLink's "Star Trek" service, especially since only a small portion
of Web surfers log onto Paramount's Web site for the series. Research firm
Nielsen/NetRatings said that over the last year, the site saw 300,000 to

740,000 unique visitors a month.

"'Star Trek' as a franchise doesn't have a widespread appeal on a consistent basis," said Jarvis Mak, a senior analyst at Nielsen/NetRatings. "Financially, it would be interesting to see how it works out because it would take a lot of resources to update their new content all the time and modify it so that it's constantly providing subscribers with interesting things that make it worthwhile for them to subscribe to this."

EarthLink said the new service is available through various channels, including Paramount's "Star Trek" Web site. EarthLink subscribers can use StarTrek.net at no additional cost. New subscribers can sign up for the services for $21.95 per month.

Researchers Take a Spin on Future Web

Two University of California, San Diego research groups are teaming with technology startups to develop and test applications that will run on Internet2, the next-generation version of the Web.

Mike Vildibill, director of the Southern California NGI (Next Generation Internet) and the San Diego Supercomputer Center (SDSC), told NewsFactor the research and development will focus on harnessing the power of a high-speed Internet.

The research teams are conceptualizing and experimenting with new modes of Internet communication using the "infinite connection" of the next-generation World Wide Web.

The initiative is a joint effort of the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology, or CAL-(IT)2, and Southern California NGI. The two groups will collaborate with several companies to work on applications that include global trading, multi-modal disabled access and wireless Web services for the faster, more powerful Internet of the future.

Vildibill said the next-generation Internet will allow the sharing of entire databases and terabytes of real-time streaming video, adding that the biggest question for developers is "What could I do with this infinite connection?"

Calling the Internet2 network "a real-world testbed for real-world applications," Vildibill said he envisions next-generation videoconferencing with the next iteration of the Internet.

"There's such rich network connectivity," he told NewsFactor. "It would be technically feasible to put cameras in offices and, at any given time, have all of your co-workers or partners on the wall in little windows you could talk through."

Vildibill said Cal-(IT)2's participation brings a different perspective, particularly in wireless communications, which he says will be a cornerstone of the next-generation Internet.

Vildibill posed another question for researchers: "What's the impact when you have four times more wireless than wired devices attached? This is

data flying through the air and onto optical networks. How do we bridge that?"

Vildibill, who said Southern California NGI is one of 180 institutions connected to the high-speed network known as Internet2, credits the growth of optical networks for making high-bandwidth connectivity affordable for companies.

"We're working with powerful bandwidth to connect, in the hope that all of the Internet will have the same characteristics for all of us," Vildibill said.

Vildibill said Southern California NGI and Cal-(IT)2 will make its high-speed network -- along with computers, staff, expertise and money -- available to nine small Southern California startups to develop applications "that require the features of a next-generation Internet."

Among the technologies being developed as part of the collaboration are:

e-business reliability through Kenamea's application network;

a global trading Web (GTW) virtual catalog from Commerce One, with real-time access to information about products and services from thousands of suppliers; and

technologies that assist software developers in the construction of universally designed Web services from Pangea.

The SDSC will address the issue of security on the next-generation Internet and plans to produce a high-quality, high performance implementation of the Draft Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) standard for a new syslog protocol, according to Southern California NGI.

Mobile Web services middleware maker Sophica will set up an environment for a select set of technology and service providers to test and demonstrate interoperability of Web services.

Groups Oppose Europe Limiting Online Hate Speech

More than a dozen business and civil liberties groups said on Wednesday that a proposed amendment to an international computer-crime law could limit free speech and expose high-tech firms to legal liability.

Groups ranging from the American Civil Liberties Union to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said in a letter to Bush Administration officials that they objected to a proposed amendment to the Council of Europe Convention on Cyber-Crime that seeks to place limits on racist or xenophobic speech.

"While we abhor both xenophobia and racism, this Protocol raises a number of fundamental procedural and substantive concerns to U.S. industry and public interest groups," the letter said.

South Africa, the United States, Canada, and Japan joined nearly 30 European countries in signing the agreement last fall to fight Internet-based crime, from hacking and child pornography to life-threatening felonies.

But negotiators failed to agree on hate-speech laws. Unlike the United States, which guarantees free speech under the First Amendment to the Constitution, many European countries have laws against inciting racial hatred.

Under a compromise, hate-speech provisions are being negotiated in a separate side agreement.

But even if the United States does not sign the agreement, U.S. business and citizens could find their rights threatened online, the groups said.

U.S. Internet users could find themselves forced to comply with the hate-speech laws of other countries, while Internet providers could be forced to monitor their customers for possible violations, the groups said.

The groups thanked Attorney General John Ashcroft and Secretary of State Colin Powell for raising their concerns previously and urged them to stay involved in the negotiations, which are not open to outside parties.

The French government and Internet portal Yahoo Inc. have clashed over whether Yahoo has the right to sell Nazi paraphernalia on its auction site.

A French judge ordered Yahoo in 2000 to block French citizens' access to the material, but in November 2001 a U.S. judge said it did not need to comply with French laws limiting hate speech.

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